

My name is Ben Sharp... I'm from Hot Springs, I grew up here, this is my home.

I am speaking to Contentions 3 and 6

Specifically I will assert that

- 1) if this mine goes ahead, the aquifers will leak, and underground contamination will spread; and
- 2) There will be no clean up.

~~I said that I am from Hot Springs but I've been living overseas since 1996.~~ I'm a scientist; I have a Master's Degree, I have a PhD, and for the last 10 years I've been travelling and representing the New Zealand government in international negotiations based on science. But I'm back here now, I've come home, with my family.

I tell you my background not to say you should ~~listen to me~~ ^{trust me} because I'm some kind of expert... precisely the opposite... it's only to point out that I've spent my professional life creating and analyzing computer models, evaluating scientific evidence, listening to expert testimony... and sometimes this process helps us get to the truth... but just as often the *pretence* of a scientific process is used to manipulate or hide the truth.

^{Solter} So don't be too impressed by experts; trust your own experience and common sense. Fair enough, sometimes common sense is wrong... but science is about logic and evidence, so if your common sense is wrong, a scientist should be able to explain to you the logic, and show you the evidence, to demonstrate that the truth lies elsewhere. Any time a scientist resorts to saying 'trust us, we're the experts' or 'because our computer models say so', it means he's probably lying, or trying to hide something.

With specific respect to computer models, let's remember that a computer model can only show you the logical consequences of its assumptions; if the assumptions are wrong, or based on incomplete data, then *the model is wrong*. In this case we ~~can show~~ ^{see} that the assumptions used in Powertech's hydrological model are not supported by evidence, and the most relevant data is being ~~ignored and hidden~~ ^{withheld} from us.

The Powertech model *assumes* outright no vertical leakage of water between aquifers through the so-called separating layers... The best available evidence to test this assumption comes from extensive geological surveys and tests done by the Tennessee Valley Authority in the 1970s. This was a government survey, it was not conducted privately ~~for~~ ^{the} for a particular company that already knew what answer they wanted.

And what did the TVA conclude?

We already heard it this morning, the TVA concluded that the Fall River and Lakota aquifers *leak*, and they don't just leak from abandoned boreholes, they leak because *the geology itself is fractured in the whole region*. Similarly we also heard this morning about braccia pipes and other fractures

allowing water movement between deeper aquifers in the area, including the Minnalusa and the Madison.

Yet Powertech comes along and reaches the opposite conclusion. "~~Everything before~~ ^T the geology isn't fractured, the aquifers don't leak... trust us, we're the experts, we have a computer model..." They never say how the original TVA report got it wrong, and I guess we're expected to just forget it even exists.

Even better, nobody's allowed to look at the TVA data anymore.... because Powertech bought it and it's 'commercially sensitive'. Now ^{should} under the rules they have to share it anyway, and on August 8th the ASLB ordered them to provide ^{it} yet they still refuse... and their reasoning is that the data *isn't relevant*, because they only bought the data for purposes of improving their profits, and their profitability isn't mentioned under the data sharing rules. Is that a joke?! Why don't they go all out and just say they bought the data to paper the walls of their office, and because the data sharing rules don't mention wallpaper....

Folks, if that sounds like a stitch-up, that's because it is. In 1980 the TVA concluded *on the basis of these data* that the geology is fractured and the aquifers leak... it couldn't possibly be MORE relevant to Contention 3. So until the TVA data is made available to these proceedings... not just some 'expert summary' but the actual data... not just to the NRC but to everyone here... then this process is incomplete... and if the NRC rubber-stamps this mining permit before that happens they are derelict in their duties as public officials.

So I guess we'll see you all back here again next year, ~~same time same place~~ except with all the data next time.....

My second assertion was that there will be no clean-up.

To understand this we need to think a bit more big-picture than the information being presented to us.

Azarga, which has acquired Powertech, is a Chinese company.

The United States is in debt to the Chinese government for 2 trillion dollars. That debt will never be paid; even if the IRS were to confiscate 100% of the income of every US citizen, that debt is un-payable, and the US can't pay by the usual means of producing things of value and selling them back to China, because our manufacturing base has been ~~gutted~~ ^{dismantled} and sent overseas.

So, under international free trade agreements, what happens next is the indebted country is forced to liquidate its own infrastructure and natural resources for the benefit of its foreign creditors. *The creditor country holds all the power*;... the US government will have *no* power to compel a Chinese corporation to do anything, ~~including~~ including clean up their mess when this project is over (or just as likely long before that, when they have a bad flood or an accident.)

In this situation

There will be no clean up. This same process has happened for decades in dozens of countries all around the world... foreign corporations from the creditor nations come in, they take what's valuable, and then they pack up and they leave... and the locals are left to live in the toxic aftermath.

which our government has signed

If you want to see what that looks like go to Azerbaijan, go to Papua New Guinea, go to Ecuador. Except on the reservation, most of us in America don't know what this feels like because until now we've always been the creditor nation... but times have changed, folks... evidently someone thinks it's our turn. Evidently someone in Washington is saying to the Chinese: 'Be cool guys, don't spend your 2 trillion just yet, we've got some really good water and maybe a bit of uranium in South Dakota that you can have... it's just a bunch of cowboys and hippies and Indians out there anyway, I'm sure no one will notice.'

Well... we're noticing.

And I say this: Nobody asked us in the 1980s before they dismantled Detroit and shipped America's manufacturing capacity overseas... nobody in this room got rich over the next two decades while the bankers printed 2 trillion dollars worth of IOUs to buy back the products that used to be made here in America... yet somehow it is our home that will be raped and processed and shipped overseas to pay those debts.

Well, to the politicians who sold us out and the bankers who got rich off of it, I say: pay your own bad debts. This is our home. Not for sale.

To all of you at the NRC, I'm sure you don't feel like the paid agents of a foreign government... I'm sure no Chinese man in a trenchcoat has been slipping you envelopes full of cash.... but, with all due respect, if you rubber-stamp this process that's exactly what you have become, whether you understand it or not.

And to all of you locally who have signed your deals or bought Powertech stock, and are trying to push this through to make some quick cash: All through history, in every foreign invasion or foreign occupation there are always those local turncoats and petty local officials who are eager to collaborate with the occupying power and sell out their own communities for a pocketful of silver. It's been that way for 5000 years, and I guess this time is no different. But this is important: this is our home, these are our lives, and our children's lives.... so maybe you all need to go home and take a long hard look in the mirror and decide who's side you're on. The rest of us are watching. And we're not going anywhere. This is our home.

Not for sale.